

Children's Sermon
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
October 23rd, 2022
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa
The Reverend Victoria Scott
Reading: [LUKE 18:9-14](#)

We've just heard Jesus tell a story about a Pharisee and a tax collector.

That story was originally written down in Greek, and today there are many different translations of it into English. I'm going to read a different translation of it, now:

"Jesus told his next story to some who were complacently pleased with themselves over their moral performance and looked down their noses at the common people: "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax man. The Pharisee posed and prayed like this: 'Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like this tax man. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income.' "Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, 'God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.'" Jesus commented, "This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk around with your nose in the air, you're going to end up flat on your face, but if you're content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself." [Luke 18:9-14, The Message]

Jesus is offering a reminder here. He is reminding that going around thinking that we are better than other people isn't what God wants us to do. But it's not as simple as us trying to avoid being like the Pharisee or trying to be just like the tax collector.

If we go around with our noses in the air and our arms crossed, we cut ourselves off from God and from one another. We can end up just as cut off or disconnected if we're slumped over with our faces in our hands. And we can all be both these ways – noses in the air, or faces in our hands – at different times and for different reasons.

Thinking about these ways of positioning our bodies – this body language – can help us to remember how God invites us feel, and to be in the world.

I've made these little wire figures for you as a reminder. Let's look at them together. Let's bend them, so that they might look a little like the Pharisee, arms crossed, head bent so that if it had a nose it would be in the air. Now, what about if we bend them so that the hands are covering the face?

Jesus came to be with us to show us that God loves us. To show us that God wants us to feel loved, and to find ways show that love to others. We can't do that with our noses in the air or with our faces in our hands.

Let's bend the figures again. This time let's make the face look forward. Let's open the arms.

It's openness that God invites us into. Eyes, arms, hands, and hearts, open. Open to receive and feel God loving us, no matter what. Open to opportunities to connect with others and our world. Open to opportunities to show God's love to others. I pray that this time here this morning will be a time of opening. Opening our hearts to God, and to one another.

I invite you all to take a little figure with you. Just like this figure, we can all end up a little bent out of shape by our experiences. Some days, we might catch ourselves with our noses in the air, wanting to feel better than others. Some days, we might feel bent over with guilt, or worry, or fear. If – when – that happens, open the arms of this figure, move the head so that it's looking out and around in the world, and let it remind you that God's love is always there, waiting for you to feel it, waiting for you to let it show in the world.

A prayer, to close this time:

Loving God, we give thanks for this time here this morning. We give thanks for your love, with us, in us, always. Help us, when we feel bent out of shape, to remember your love, and to open our eyes, arms, hands and hearts to it. Help us to show your love, in all we do. In Jesus name. Amen.